Free-Trade Agreement with WTO Members

496. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the free trade agreement, signed by the country with other WTO members, so far;

(b) the list of commodities that has been accorded duty concessions; and

(c) whether India and South Africa have any trade pact and if not, whether bilateral agreement is likely to be signed with that country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) and (b) A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was signed between India and Sri Lanka on 28th December, 1998 in New Delhi. The FTA has been made operative by the issuance of Customs Notification on 1st March, 2000. The Agreement envisages phasing out of tariffs on all products, over a period of time, except for a limited number of items in the Negative List. While India would complete the process of tariff elimination over a period of 3 years, Sri Lanka would achieve this over 8 years. The list of commodities that have been accorded duty concession by India is available in the Custom Notification No. 26/2000-Customs dated 1st March, 2000 read with Notification No. 59/2000-Customs dated 12th May, 2000; No. 60/2000-Customs dated 12th May, 2000; No. 20/2001 -Customs dated 1 st March, 2001; No. 135/2001-Customs dated 31st December, 2001; No. 24/2002-Customs dated 1st March 2002 and No. 126/2002-Customs dated 12th November, 2002.

(c) There is a bilateral Trade Agreement between India and South Africa signed on 22nd August, 1994, however this does not provide for exchange of duty concessions on commodities traded between the two countries. We are in the process of negotiating a Preferential Trading Arrangement with South Africa.